



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Health, Education, and Human Services Committee approves
legislations to tax “junk foods” and eliminating tax on fresh fruits and vegetables**

WINDOW ROCK – The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee met on Wednesday, to discuss Legislation No. 0289-13 and Legislation No. 0290-13, a conjoined effort to implement a two-percent tax on certain “junk foods” and beverages and to eliminate the sales tax on fresh fruits and vegetables on the Navajo Nation.

On Oct. 15, the HEHSC voted to delete both legislations from their agenda, to allow for the legislation sponsor Council Delegate Danny Simpson (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse’ii’ahi, Whiterock) to work with various Navajo Nation entities to improve the language of both legislations.

“Every single day we face health issues like cancer and diabetes. The taxation of junk food is one way we can go about addressing this issue,” said Delegate Simpson. “We have worked with the Navajo Tax Commission, Navajo Division of Health, and Division of Community Development to improve this legislation according to the HEHSC’s recommendations.”

Following the presentation, HEHSC member Council Delegate Kenneth Maryboy (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tófikan, Red Mesa) said he supported both legislations, but would consider the needs of people already living with such health conditions.

“In our [Navajo] culture, we use food as a way to celebrate during traditional ceremonies, revivals, and peyote meetings. I would like to know if anyone is monitoring the soda we drink and the mutton stew we eat after those gatherings,” said Delegate Maryboy. “We need to help educate our people about making healthy choices everyday.”

HEHSC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) said he believes there is a better to influence food choices besides imposing taxes, add that he would support the legislation if the proposed tax was instead decreased to one-percent.

Speaking in favor of the legislation, HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) suggested that the sponsor work with the Indian Health Service to coordinate a study that evaluates “junk food” purchases on the Nation.

“If this legislation passes, I would like for us to monitor its progress within the first three years of its implementation,” said HEHSC vice chair Council Delegate Charles Damon II (Bááháálí,

Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh). "This way we can find out if this initiative really works."

Delegate Damon proposed an amendment to attach additional supporting exhibits to the legislation and to include language that requires a review of the taxation process in three years.

HEHSC members approved the amendment with a vote of 3-0, and passed Legislation No. 0289-13 with a vote of 2-1.

Following the vote, the HEHSC unanimously passed Legislation No. 0290-13 with a vote of 3-0.

The legislations will be considered by the Navajo Nation Council for final approval.

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